

TOP SECRET

25X1

NSC BRIEFING

12 April 1962

SOUTH VIETNAM

I. The Viet Cong have at least 24,500 armed regular and regional troops in South Vietnam and up to 100,000 part-time fighters. Their basic tactics are to erode government control at the village level; occasionally they mount more dramatic raids.

A. Recently, however, the Viet Cong have made greater use of battalion size units (300-500 men) with augmented fire-power including machine guns, recoilless rifles, rocket launchers, and mortars, captured or obtained from the north. Persistent sabotage last week forced the suspension of night traffic on the coastal railway north from Saigon.

B. Although government operations are also more aggressive as a result of stepped up US training and combat support, Viet Cong activity during March--totaling 1,861 reported incidents of military attacks, sabotage and terrorism--slightly exceeded the previous record high of last October.

II. Hanoi has improved its command channels to the Viet Cong.

A. A Viet Cong central headquarters has been organized in the South, and is in [] contact with the Central Committee of the North Vietnamese Communist Party in Hanoi.

25X1

TOP SECRET

25X1

TOP SECRET

25X1

B. From this headquarters, orders pass quickly down to the smallest Viet Cong units through a network of at least 52 clandestine and highly mobile radio stations.

III. Guidance is not the only commodity Hanoi provides for the Viet Cong; supplies, and hard-core comrades to staff key positions are coming down from the North.

A. Night air drops to the Viet Cong are suspected to have been carried out from North Vietnam or southern Laos on 19 and 20 March.

B. Ammunition made in Communist China has been reported in use by the Viet Cong, suggesting that both Peiping and Hanoi may now be willing to risk getting caught with their hands in the pie to increase Viet Cong fire power and combat effectiveness.

IV. Politically, the Communists are advertising their National Liberation Front in South Vietnam as a rallying point for all shades of opinion opposed to Diem.

V. While they export revolution, the North Vietnamese are having their troubles at home.

A. Food shortages have led to some demonstrations and a few cases of violence against local authorities.

B. With this in mind, North Vietnamese leaders are showing concern that tactics of subversion may be used against their regime. Domestic propaganda constantly warns the population to beware of saboteurs and "bandits."

TOP SECRET

25X1

TOP SECRET

25X1

VI. With a present force goal of 200,000, South Vietnam's regular forces now total 177,200; units of the 123,000 additional paramilitary forces are receiving additional training and equipment.

A. US military personnel in South Vietnam now number about 6,000 (Army-4,221; Navy-232; Air Force-1,459; Marines-73; Total-5,985) with a planned total of about 8,100 by 30 June.

B. The US is also providing assistance in the fields of propaganda, civic action, welfare, tribal resettlement, and in the establishment of strategic hamlets designed to regain support for the government at the village level.

VII. As long as the Diem government feels insecure, it is unlikely to undertake the broad political reforms demanded by many of its critics.

1. Another coup attempt remains a possibility, even though most Vietnamese officers still see little alternative to Diem.

a. Since the strafing of the presidential palace in February, concern over the power vacuum which could arise from Diem's sudden death by assassination or otherwise has led to maneuvering among top officials, both civilian and military, aimed at filling the gap in any sudden crisis.

- 3 -

TOP SECRET

25X1

25X1

Approved For Release 2005/01/06 : CIA-RDP82R00025R000200090005-0

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

Approved For Release 2005/01/06 : CIA-RDP82R00025R000200090005-0